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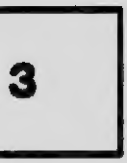

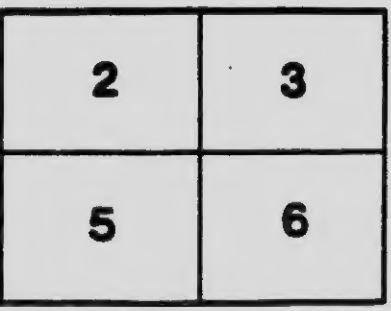

Glaring Corruption In Victoria Co., N.S.

BRIBERY—TREATING—PERSONATION

By Conservatives in the 1914
By-Election

DOMINION GOVERNMENT BOAT "ALERT" USED TO CARRY LIQUOR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY HEELERS.

F. B. McCURDY'S (M. P.) MAN, MUIRHEAD, CHIEF "BAG-HOLDER," AND DISPENSED CASH WITH AN OPEN HAND.

GOVERNMENT TELEGRAPH LINES WERE "FREE TO PROMINENT CONSERVATIVES."

STARTLING EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF MR. JUSTICE RUSSELL, GIVEN NOVEMBER 18, 1914.

Publication No. 35

PAAP

By-Election in Victoria County, N. S.
1914

"Corrupt Practices Extensively Prevailed."

"**Abundant evidence was offered of acts of bribery and corruption, and subornation of personation, on the part of agents of the respondent.**"—Extracts from the report of Mr. Justice Russell, in his decision in the Victoria (N.S.) bye-election trial, in which he unseated Philip MacLeod, the Conservative who had been elected February 12, 1914.

Who are the agents of the Conservative candidate, thus found guilty of such illegal and immoral conduct? Mr. Justice Russell, in his judgment November 18, found "guilty of a corrupt practice" no less than **twenty-three of the most prominent Conservatives in Nova Scotia**, including:

Dr. Joseph Hayes, secretary of the Nova Scotia Conservative Association;

W. H. Muirhead, employe and right-hand man of **F. B. McCurdy, M.P., of Halifax**; member for Shelburne and Queen's;

J. R. McNeil, councillor, Bay St., Lawrence;

Hugh Dan McLean, councillor, New Waterford, assistant, Conservative organizer, who admitted getting $600 of which he testified, under oath, that **$300** came from Muirhead, **F. B. McCurdy's man**; and

Nineteen other Nova Scotia Conservative workers.

Others charged with equally corrupt and nefarious practices included: J. R. MacLeod, president of the Nova Scotia Conservative Association, A. L. Davidson, federal member for Annapolis; J. C. Douglas, M.P.P. for Cape Breton, (whom the politicians of Nova Scotia call the "Bob Rogers" of the province); Howard Corning, M. P.P., Yarmouth; and

One hundred and twelve other N.S. Conservatives. They escaped legal responsibility, on technicalities, but not freedom from the stain of moral obliquity.

Dominion Government Boat Carried "BOOZE".

It was amazingly easy for voters to procure liquor from Conservative workers and hangers-on during election day and the days preceding. Even in the northern part of the riding liquor could be had a-plenty—**because, on two occasions at least, the Government boat "Alert" was used to carry barrels of liquor and parties of party heelers up the coast!**

Apparently the brand of liquor taken into the north country by the "**Alert**" was not of a quality to satisfy the palates of certain Conservative connoisseurs. "Gannon booze rotten", was the phrase used in one telegram, submitted in evidence, and which was sent, four days before the election, by Councillor H. D. McLean to J. C. Douglas, M.P.P.

Truly the North Victoria voters were hard to satisfy.

Philip MacLeod, the unseated, dishonored candidate, who so foully won his seat as the result of the machinations of **McCurdy, Douglas, Muirhead, Hayes, et al**, admitted the trip to the North on the government boat "Alert", but pretended not to have known that any liquor was on board. He was immediately "flabbergasted" when confronted with the evidence of a Sydney truckman, who testified that **he wheeled two barrels of liquor, each full, down to the Government boat.**

The Captain of the "Alert", John Voltier, said that the boat was ready for a regular trip north January 20, but was **held up four days by order of Government Prevention Officer Young,** for "passengers", including the candidate himself, Dr. Hayes, Councillor McNeil, and others.

Nova Scotia's most amazing election trial opened in the little Baddeck court-room, November 4, and in the first three days' sessions, Conservative lawyers made three separate and distinct efforts to thwart the ends of justice. J. A. McLaren, K.C., for the respondent, asked that the seat be declared vacant and the election voided, because his client was willing to plead guilty to knowledge of a technical violation of the election law: to wit, paying for the driving of one infirm voter to the polls. It was to laugh, and Mr. Justice Russell, an "upright and honest judge", defeated the scheme by ordering the trial to proceed. He made a similar ruling on Nov. 5, and Nov. 6, **much to the Conservatives discomfiture.**

Bribery and Corruption Rampant.

The offences of the Conservative party at this particular by-election may most easily be discussed under the following five heads:

Bribery, Treating, Personation, Intimidation, General Corruption.

Most amazing was the story unfolded before Mr. Justice Russell, and in no phase of it was the cause of Conservatism given a more ruthless exposure than in the allegations of **bribery.**

One of the leading witnesses at the trial was Councillor Joseph McNeil, of Bay St., Lawrence, who asked the "protection of the court". He had been given a roll of bills, at least $50 or $75, which he was to spend on the election. He testified that he gave

cash to several voters, and that it was **to buy their votes,** and that drinking was so common that he could not remember to whom he dispensed "booze".

"**Then you used liquor and money quite extensively?**" witness was asked.

"**Sure!**", he nonchalantly replied.

E. A. McNeil admitted quite freely that he "handled the bag" for a part of Iona. W. H. Muirhead, the "chief bag-holder", and employe of **F. B. McCurdy and Co.,** Halifax, gave him a package of money containing $100. McNeil also swore that he acted as messenger, and carried a package of money, amount unknown, from Muirhead, **McCurdy's "Man Friday"**, to John H. Walker, an active Conservative.

M. D. McNeil, also of Iona, was not bribed in cash, as far as is shown in the evidence, but he testified that he was promised the postmastership in 1911; when he didn't get it he declined to do any work in the 1914 by-election unless pacified; and after this threat J. C. Douglas, M.P.P., showed him what purported to be the resignation of the postmaster. Then he "got to work." **The Conservatives thus told him that they had gotten rid of a faithful and efficient Liberal postmaster, to make room for him.**

Sandy McDonald candidly admitted that Muirhead handed him $50, the transaction taking place where so many others equally nefarious transpired, at the Telegraph House, Baddeck. **McCurdy's** man was always on the job.

In all, **138 cases of bribery** were alleged, and as man after man took the stand to contribute his quota to the story of the iniquities of the Conservatives, and the **McCurdy-Hayes-Muirhead system,** it was possible to get more than a glimpse how complete had been their debauchery of the electorate.

Liquor Even at Polls.

Many Conservatives kept open-house election day, distributing "booze" with a prodigal hand. Sandy McDonald, mentioned above, the president of the Conservative Association in his district, testified that he distributed liquor at the North Shore poll election day, and also at his own home. He did this, he stated under oath, in the interests of Philip MacLeod, Conservative candidate.

Charles Kempt, of Boularderie, testified that he saw several **Conservative workers dispensing liquor, election day, in a small room, adjoining the polling booth.**

Further evidence showed that the ramifications of the treating system extended throughout all parts of the riding, and the Conservative runners were busily engaged election day and the days preceding in despatching "booze" to all sections of the constituency—**even by Government boat.**

Twenty cases of personation, principally at Middle River and South Gut, were instanced in the allegations made against Hayes, Douglas and Muirhead, **McCurdy's hench-men.** That this phase of the trial was not more extensively gone into was due to the fact that more than twenty witnesses were spirited away by the agents of the respondent. Yet the evidence given on the stand clearly showed to what depths the **Conservative machine was willing to sink in order to win.**

Some of the personations were so palpably absurd as to be ludicrous: Men with such names as McGillivray and McKay were used to impersonate Eli Cormier and Jules Des Vaux. How barefaced such effrontery is, on the very surface!

In a wire, signed in code, received by Hugh Dan McLean, the phrase occurs: "Wire Philpot to come and **bring four ringers**; hundred confidentially". On the stand McLean was asked what the word "**ringers**" meant, and after considerable prodding he finally admitted that probably it was similar to race-track slang, and meant "**Voters**" or "**Personators.**".

A bunch of fourteen men were taken from Middle River to South Gut, and the majority used as **personators.** Walter Techner, a soldier, of New Waterford, testified that he was given the name of "Sam Porier" to vote, at South Gut, but he was challenged and, very sensibly, declined to take the oath. But several others in his party went to the poll and voted on names supplied to them by Conservative party workers.

Promised Job by Cochrane, (Minister of Railways and Canals.)

Angus R. Campbell, who had been an employe of the I. C. R. from 1902 to 1913, and then dismissed, testified that he had been promised his job back, if he "voted right". He was shown a telegram "fixing" this, **purporting to be signed by Frank Cochrane, Minister of Railways.** On the strength of this telegram he worked for the Conservatives, and also pulled all possible wires to get his friends into action.

Later in the course of the evidence, J. C. Douglas, M.P.P., testified that the above-mentioned telegram had been sent to him; he stated that I. probably had wired to some **Federal member from Nova Scotia to "fix" it, though it was quite possible that he had wired to the Minister of Railways personally.**

The **Fenian Raid Circular** was one of the most important issues of the campaign, and came within an ace of ending Plilip MacLeod's future participation in politics. The Conservatives (on their own admission) sent out to about 160 Fenian veterans a circular, in which the following extract was the salient feature:

"There is a report that many of the applicants were not really sure that they drilled in March and April, 1866, and consequently had no right to it. I think **I can assure you that nothing will be done to our friends in that connection**", thereby clearly intimating that unless the veterans voted for MacLeod, prosecution on a perjury charge would follow.

This circular was signed "Philip MacLeod", but the candidate denied all knowledge of it, though some twenty of the signatures were **so like his own that he could not tell them from signatures which he admitted were his.**

Dr. Hayes—Secretary of the Provincial Conservative Association—took the stand and admitted full responsibility for the preparation and sending out of the circulars, but said that **he saw Muirhead sign them.** This was the first time that such an idea had been even suggested, and the blame was thrown on Muirhead, because this scape-goat (?) was in England, encamped on Salisbury Plains, and therefore could not appear at the trial. Hayes admitted that Muirhead's "**forgery**" was so like MacLeod's own signature, that he had remarked that Muirhead did it "**even better than Philip himself.**"

Treated as a Criminal Case.

Judge Russell treated the question of disqualification of MacLeod, on the score of the **signature** as a criminal question, and gave the disqualified candidate the **benefit of the doubt always extended to accused criminals.** His Worship added that the circular was, beyond doubt, "an efficient piece of machinery, for the **manufacture of political friendship,** and, as such, came "within the prohibition of the statute".

Two other equally glaring pieces of political chicanery were exposed at the trial. It was shown that either Dr. Hayes, or some one acting under his orders, had added to a school board circular the words: "Philip MacLeod dissenting" to mislead and delude the electors into thinking that the candidate had voted in opposition to a motion to increase the school rate. **This, if true, might have been a popular dodge, but it was an absolute lie, as MacLeod had voted with the rest for the increase.**

Hundreds of circulars were sent out, signed by the name of James G. Dunlap, Secretary of the Victoria County Conservative Association, enclosing a false memo of estimates alleged to have been made by the **Dominion Government for public works contemplated in Victoria County.** MacLeod took the stand and denied all connection with the "estimates" circular; he asserted that it had been prepared by Hayes and Douglas, without his consent. **Hayes took the stand, contradicted MacLeod flatly, and shifted the responsibility for this "estimates" circular to a man who died a few weeks before the trial!**

Many amazing statements made during the course of the trial showed **how callously the Conservatives**, including leaders of the party as well as rank and file, **treated the question of corruption**. One example: J. C. Douglas, M.P.P. for Cape Breton, said he **had no knowledge of money being used, but that he presumed it was like other elections, and the usual amounts employed**.

Later, he testified on the stand that he tried to keep away from a knowledge of certain things that were going on. He did not want to have anything to do with the handling of liquor or money—or knowledge thereof—and wilfully abstained from an opportunity to know about such things. A telegram, from J. C. Douglas, which was placed in evidence, read in part: **if any office-holders take part in this election against Philip MacLeod advise me and the result will undoubtedly be to their detriment**".

A number of telegrams put in as exhibits showed that **Hugh** Dan McLean did not work "for love of the cause" only. For the few days he was "on the job" he got $600; $300 from Muirhead, **McCurdy's hench-man and the "bag-holder;"** and $300 from J. E. McLeod after the election.

"Money No Object."

While Dr. Hayes, Conservative secretary, was on the stand he stated that he himself did not have any money that was not in his province. Reams and reams of further evidence of nefarious agreements might be reproduced here, but may be read in the court records. Here are just a few: Michael D. McNeil said he was "promised plenty of contract work after the election". Robert McKay said he was paid $50 for the transporting of a number of French personators from Grand Etang to South Gut.

"Money no object; we want the men". Mrs. Julie Terrio, telegraph operator, said was one piece of information she heard go over the wire, between prominent Conservatives in Baddeck and Chetecamp.

Neil McDonald testified that on election day Muirhead, **McCurdy's man,** stuffed a roll of bills into his hand. He did not count the roll, but became suspicious and returned all but $20.

Telegraph operators testified that the **Government telegraph lines were "free to Conservative workers"**. Mrs. Terrio exhibited twenty-five of these "free telegrams" which she had happened to keep. David Dunlap, operator at Baddeck, said that messages were always taken **free for prominent Conservatives**. He said he sent many free telegrams for Conservatives during the by-election campaign, and instructed other operators along the line to do likewise. He added, that **for seventeen years, prior to 1896, he had sent messages free for members of the Conservative party.**

Such tales of a debauched electorate, a systematically debauched constituency, might be continued, almost without end, merely with excerpts from the trial record. Why were not prosecutions started and the guilty brought to book? is a question which naturally arises. Because, by the provisions of the N.S. Election Act, no prosecution can be sustained, unless brought within a limited time. And **this time had expired before the commencement of the trial.**

But, before the bar of public opinion, the Conservative party of Nova Scotia, **its rank and file and officers, has been adjudged GUILTY.**

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